

North Bromsgrove High School

School Drive, Stratford Road, Bromsgrove, B60 1BA

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Progress in Years 9 to 11 is not good in many subjects.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Students do not make good progress and attainment on advanced courses is often below average.
- Sometimes teaching does not help students to think and learn for themselves.
- Marking is often infrequent and it does not always tell students how to improve.
- Homework is frequently limited to finishing off classwork.
- The data that the school collects about progress is based on predictions rather than on actual grades. The information is not always accurate and it is not used well enough to identify students who need extra help.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured enough improvement in teaching and achievement since the previous inspection.
- Governors have not had enough positive impact on school improvement.
- Too much responsibility for improving the school rests on the shoulders of the senior leadership team, particularly the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Subject leaders do not take enough responsibility for the work of their departments and do not always hold their teams fully to account for the quality of teaching and learning.
- Although there is very little disruption in lessons, students often lack interest and commitment to learning. Provision for personal, social and health education is weak.

The school has the following strengths

- There are good relationships between staff and students. Students know teachers care about them.
- The headteacher has created a climate of optimism in which improvements are being made, and teaching is improving.
- The school's senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and of the key improvement priorities for the school.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, especially in the sixth form and are willing to give additional time to support students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 50 lessons, including observations made jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They also made shorter visits to several other lessons to look at students' books.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors. A telephone call was made to a representative of the local authority.
- The views of 63 parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, were analysed. Inspectors also took account of the views of two parents who spoke to inspectors and one parent who wrote to the team. They looked at the views of parents, students and staff from a survey conducted last academic year. The results of 40 staff questionnaires were analysed.
- Inspectors analysed past examination results and scrutinised the school's data showing how well students are progressing the current academic year.
- They reviewed a range of school documents, including: minutes of meetings, curriculum plans, records relating to safeguarding and behaviour and data on attendance and exclusions. They looked at the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plans.

Inspection team

Mary Le Breuilly, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Bowles	Additional Inspector
Justine McNeillie	Additional Inspector
Jo Curd	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school that takes students from Year 9 upwards.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and those from services families) is low compared with the national average. There are very few looked after students and none from service families.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is average, as is the proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision at the Forge Secondary Short Stay School and at a construction training centre, known as the 'Unit'. A few students also have part-time placements with Worcester Warriors Rugby Club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- There is a specialist unit for students with autistic spectrum disorder within the school. Two students currently attend this unit.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and speed up progress and achievement for all groups of students by:
 - providing a wider variety of learning activities to promote students' active involvement in learning
 - establishing consistency in the frequency and quality of marking so that all students receive regular feedback that helps them improve
 - matching tasks more closely to abilities of students, particularly the more able
 - setting more appropriate learning tasks for homework.
- Make students keen to learn and strengthen the provision for their personal, social and health education, especially preparation for later life, learning and internet safety.
- Senior leaders and governors should ensure that:
 - subject leaders take more direct responsibility for their departments, particularly in improving the quality of teaching and in holding their teams to account for the progress of the students in their subjects
 - the accuracy with which students' progress is assessed is improved and used to identify and help students who are in need of additional support to make the progress they should and to hold teachers accountable for that progress.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly as expected nationally. In 2012, 47% of students gained five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics, which is below the national average and represented a drop from the previous year's standards.
- In 2012, the proportion of students making the nationally expected rate of progress in English and mathematics fell to below expectations. Too few students made progress that exceeded national expectations. However, inspection evidence, supported by data provided by the school, indicate that current students are now making better progress than that in recent years. Year 11's progress in English and mathematics is likely to be at least in line with national performance.
- Students make good progress in science at Key Stage 4. Progress in humanities and modern foreign languages is similar to that seen nationally.
- In 2012 the gap in attainment between Year 11 students eligible for the pupil premium and the others in their year group was lower by just over a grade in English and about a grade and a quarter in mathematics. This year they are making slightly better progress than their peers in the school as a result of the extra support they receive from the pupil premium and the attainment gap is closing. The school is working hard to ensure equal opportunity for groups that have not attained well enough in the past.
- The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs, like other groups, requires improvement. School data show that current students receiving extra support are making reasonable progress in English and mathematics, although irregular attendance impedes the learning of some individuals.
- Students who have been supported in the specialist unit for autism in recent years have made good progress in their communication skills as a result of specialist support and intervention. This extra help has enabled them to meet their academic targets.
- Students attending alternative provision placements make better academic progress than when they were in school as they become more motivated and willing to work. There is close contact between providers and the school regarding these students.
- In the current academic year, many students have been entered early for GCSE English, mathematics and science. The more able generally benefit from this opportunity, but the grades of a small number of middle ability students have been limited to a C in mathematics because once they have finished the GCSE course in these subjects they use the time to improve or catch up with other subjects rather than to extend their attainment in these subjects. The school does not plan to use early entry in this manner again.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. In 2012, A-level students' results in many subjects were below national averages and they made progress that fell below what it should have been. Inspection evidence suggests that current students are making better progress, but this has yet to be established as a clear pattern over time.
- In the best learning in lessons observed, inspectors saw students acquire knowledge and understanding quickly and securely and progress was good.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Lessons are often dominated by teachers speaking extensively to the class and students sometimes lose interest. In these situations, there are insufficient opportunities for them to become actively involved, for example through discussion in pairs or small groups or through activities that challenge them to think for themselves.
- Students are presented with too few opportunities to solve problems for themselves. They lack scope for investigative work and practical learning activities.
- Marking is very inconsistent. Some marking is good with an appropriate balance between work marked by the students themselves and with teachers who mark regularly and give good pointers for improvement. Often, however, books are left unmarked for too long or marking consists of a series of ticks and crosses with little or no constructive comment. When this happens students' work is often shoddy or incomplete because they know it will not be checked properly.
- Teachers rely too heavily on the fact that most classes are intended to be groups of similar ability and, in some lessons, work is not sufficiently tailored to the differing learning needs and abilities of the students within the class. When this happens, the more-able students, in particular, are not challenged enough to achieve well.
- Homework in many lessons consists of finishing off classwork. In these situations, homework does not provide opportunities for students to extend their learning beyond school for themselves.
- The best learning seen involved lively activities. Time-limited tasks kept the pace of learning brisk while still giving students time to think for themselves. Effective questioning from teachers deepened students' understanding.
- Carefully targeted support is helping disabled students and those with special educational needs and students eligible for the pupil premium to catch up with their peers. Teaching assistants often make a good contribution to their support, both in lessons and in work with individuals.
- Relationships among students and teachers are generally positive. Students, including students in the sixth form, say that their teachers willingly give them extra help when they need it.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge with which to help and support students, especially in the sixth form. Much sixth form teaching seen in the inspection was good. School monitoring shows that teaching is improving.
- Teaching in the special unit for autism is effective. Students receive well-directed help to make good progress.
- Students who have poor literacy, especially reading skills, when they arrive in school are given help and catch up quickly to the standards of others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- In too many lessons students lose interest when they are not actively involved. While they do not actively misbehave, they do not engage well with what they are learning and there is too much chatter that is not related to work.
- Students generally behave well around the school and lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. The number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced this academic year and school records show there has been a reduction in the number of instances of poor behaviour. Students report that behaviour has improved since the arrival of the headteacher.
- The number of recorded incidents of bullying is low. Students report that some does occur but is dealt with by the school. Parents' views show that, though the majority think the school tackles bullying well, a significant minority have concerns about bullying. Most students say they feel safe in school and inspectors judge that bullying is not a major problem.
- The teaching of personal, social and health education during tutor time is not effective. As a result, students are not learning enough about how to keep themselves safe and healthy and they are not adequately prepared for later life and learning.
- Alternative placements for some students are having a positive effect on their attitudes and attendance. There are good links with external agencies to support those who have problems behaving appropriately in school, and there is evidence that measures put in place to support such students are having a positive impact.
- While sixth form students who are planning to go to university receive good support and guidance, other sixth form students lack the same attention.
- Attendance is improving as a result of measures the school has put in place. It is now just below average. Punctuality has also improved.
- There are too few students in the autism unit to make reliable comparisons regarding behaviour and attendance. However, the school has a good track record of improving the behaviour of students in the unit and of helping them to integrate better into the mainstream school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Too much responsibility for improving the school rests with the senior leadership team, which is currently understaffed. As a result, important monitoring tasks are confined to key departments, which are not active enough, and actions for improvement are often led solely from the top.
- In recent years, subject leaders and managers have not been given enough responsibility for developing their teams, particularly in relation to improving the quality of teaching. These leaders often know the weaknesses of their departments but have not felt able to act to secure improvement or have been unwilling to take action.
- The school does not have an accurate picture of the levels students are working at when they arrive from middle school in Year 9. It uses a system for monitoring the progress of students that is based on predictions rather than on the actual grades that students are currently working at. There is little check on the accuracy of these predictions. This process makes it difficult to identify those students that are falling behind. In addition, the data that the school collects is not

used effectively to hold all teachers to account for the progress of the students in their classes.

- The school offers an appropriate range of academic subjects in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There are activities and trips to enrich students' understanding and experiences of different subjects. However, students do not receive sufficient personal, social and health education.
- The management of staff performance takes place and there is a programme of staff development that is helping to improve the quality of teaching.
- Governors, staff and students say that there is a new air of optimism about the school since September last. Many expressed confidence that things are already improving.
- The unit for autism is well led and the school has a good track record showing how students benefit from the help they receive.
- Leaders make sure they know what the quality of education is of the students educated off-site, and that these students learn in environments that are safe.
- The local authority views the school as steadily improving and has provided support while the senior leadership team is understaffed, for example carrying out shared lesson observations with subject leaders. The school is positive about the support it has received.
- Safeguarding requirements are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are deeply committed to the school and are taking an increasing role in the strategic direction through the newly established strategic committee. They have been actively involved in reducing the budget deficit during the last three years and school finances are now more stable. Governors are more aware of what the quality of teaching is across the school and link teachers' performance to their pay. They monitor this aspect thoroughly. They also monitor the effectiveness of the pupil premium funding and now ensure that it is directed appropriately to those students who are eligible to it.
 - A mentoring scheme has been introduced for new governors and many governors attend training sessions run by the local authority to help them understand the information available on students' achievement. However, an external review of governance is recommended to help governors take stock of the impact they are making towards holding leaders fully to account for improving teaching and students' progress and attainment.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	116928
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	405679

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	930
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Taylor
Headteacher	David Hadley-Pryce
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2010
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